

# Canada: A Silent Partner in the Iraq War of 2003

By Richard Sanders, Editor, *Press for Conversion!*

The Canadian government's pretense that it did not support the latest Iraq war was repeated *ad nauseum* by the mainstream media. The ugly reality, however, is that Canada ranked third on the list of nations supporting the U.S. – just behind Britain and Australia. Many other governments, though contributing only a tiny fraction of what Canada did, were at least honest enough to admit their involvement. Canada's government was silent about its role in aiding and abetting this illegal war. It was unwilling to be declared a member of the "Coalition of the Willing," preferring – hypocritically – to act as if it had taken a principled stand *against* the war. Amazingly, the Liberal government's public relations experts once again skilfully managed to maintain their party's popular, but illusory, public image of a global peace-monger while simultaneously engaging in many blatant acts of complicity in this latest war:

- **Leading the Coalition's Navy:**

Canada led the multinational naval taskforce in the Persian Gulf. Some 1,300 Canadian troops, aboard state-of-the-art, multi-billion-dollar Canadian warships, rallied to protect U.S. aircraft carriers so they could "safely" position themselves to launch air strikes against Iraq.

- **Coordinating Air Battles:**

Canadian military personnel aboard E-3 AWACs aircraft helped to direct the war. E-3 aircraft are mobile nerve centres of modern air war. Canadian crews helped coordinate and manage air battles, and filled command, weapons control and communications roles. (*See page 16.*)

- **Providing War Planners:**

Canadian war planners worked among the war strategists at U.S. Central Command (CentCom) headquarters at McDill Air Force Base, Florida. At least two dozen of these Canadian war strategists moved with CentCom

when it relocated to the Persian Gulf, just before the war.

- **Providing Military Transport Planes:**

At least three Canadian CC-130 military transport planes were listed by the U.S. military as having helped to supply coalition forces during the war. (*See page 28.*)

- **Parts and Services for Major Weapons:**

At least 100 Canadian corporations contributed components and/or services for at least 35 of the major weapon systems that were used in the latest Iraq war. (*See pages 10-30.*) In 2002 alone, Canadian contractors sold about US\$440 million worth of military equipment to the U.S. The vast majority of this hardware was used in the Iraq war. (*See pages 38-43.*)

- **Welcoming U.S. War Planes:**

U.S. warplanes have Canadian government permission to:

- (1) fly through Canadian airspace to and from the war,
- (2) stop over for refuelling in Newfoundland and PEI,
- (3) "perform" at Canadian "air shows" to provide "entertainment" for children of all ages, and
- (4) conduct low-level, training and bombing exercises through seven "flight corridors" in Canada.

- **Freeing up Troops:**

By providing extra troops for the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, Canada freed up U.S. troops for the Iraq war.

- **Diplomatic Support:**

On numerous occasions, Canadian government officials gave diplomatic support for the war. For instance, Prime Minister Chrétien said that the U.S. had a "right" to go to war with Iraq, and that Canadians should not question the war because this gives comfort to Saddam Hussein.

- **Military Testing:**

(1) Two types of cruise missiles (AGM-86 and AGM-129) were tested in Canada, 1983-1994. (*See page 32.*)  
(2) The RQ-4A "Global Hawk" surveillance drone flew test flights over Alberta and BC in 2000. (*See page 25.*)

## What is a Military Contractor?

To some, military contractors may be strictly defined as weapons manufacturers. Others might broaden the definition to include companies that knowingly sell *any* kind of supplies to the military. Exactly where to draw the line is not straight forward.

Clearly, waging war requires military forces to have a very broad range of technology beyond merely the devices that kill and maim, or that destroy property. However, the inclusion of *all* equipment used by the military to carry out the business of war would include office furniture and simple business supplies, like pens and paper clips.

Some may try to argue that even engines, radar, communications equipment and other components, are not intrinsically destructive, and therefore the corporations that produce them should not be considered military contractors. Clearly however, such equipment is essential to the functioning of weapons and their delivery systems.

For the purposes of this issue of *Press for Conversion!*, efforts were made to include only those corporations that have received contracts to supply military institutions

with products or services that are *especially designed* to fulfil military applications.

For example Shell is included because it sells jet fuel that is modified to meet military specifications. Specialized services include, for example, the repair and overhaul of engines or other components of warplanes.

Drawing the line between military and non-military industries is assisted by the fact that many corporations *define themselves* in terms of their "defence" production, are members of the Canadian Defence Industry Association, or are known to attend international trade shows that showcase "defence" products. Others are listed by Industry Canada as either suppliers of "defence" equipment and services, or as recipients of grants for "defence" industries.

Most of Canada's military production is exported, and most of those exports go to the U.S. Canadian military contractors build very few complete weapons systems. They typically produce high-tech components for weapon systems, like aircraft, ships or tanks. Most Canadian military contractors also supply non-military products and services.